

NEWSRELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Governor asks new Reentry Task Force to help inmates become responsible, productive citizens

HELENA – Gov. Steve Bullock today addressed the first meeting of the Department of Corrections new Reentry Task Force. The 2013 Legislature created the task force to help develop and implement programs that will increase the likelihood that offenders released from prison have the skills and community resources necessary to successfully transition back into Montana communities.

“Like it or not, offenders are our neighbors. Last year, 1,173 inmates walked through the doors into Montana’s prison system, and 1,177 walked out,” Bullock said. “The charge to all of you is to make sure that, when those inmates walk out the prison gates, they are ready – and our communities are ready – for a safe and successful transition.”

Corrections director Mike Batista said that the potential cost savings in terms of prison space and the possibility of changing people’s lives are both strong reasons to expand the state services that prepare inmates for reentry.

The day-long meeting included a presentation by Dr. Ed Latessa, professor and Director of the School of Criminal Justice at the University of Cincinnati. Dr. Latessa, a leading expert in reentry, helped orient task force members to programs that have been proven effective around the nation.

Rep. Margie MacDonald introduced [House Bill 68](#) at the request of the Law and Justice Interim Committee. In an effort to enhance public safety and save the state money, the legislation directs the task force to target inmates at the greatest risk of returning to the correctional system.

While Corrections began a reentry initiative in 2008, the new task force recognizes that an effective reentry network requires a partnership that includes a number of other agencies. The

bill specifically requires task force members representing education, the university system, the Departments of Labor and Industry, Commerce, Justice, and Public Health and Human Services.

A list of task force members and the agencies and interests they represent, follows:

Name	Agency/Organization
Director Mike Batista, Chairman	Department of Corrections
Nancy Coopersmith	Office of Public Instruction
Kelly Lynch	Department of Commerce
Tom Nielson	Department of Public Health & Human Services
Steve Olson	Department of Labor and Industry
Dr. Mark Pagano	University System
John Strandell	Department of Justice
Matt Dale	Department of Justice, restorative justice rep.
Derek VanLuchene	Ryan United, crime victim rep.
Dr. Gary Mihelish	NAMI, mental health advocate
Casey Schreiner	State Representative (HD22)
Jason Smith	Governor's Office, Director of Indian Affairs
Moe Wosepka	Montana Catholic Conference, faith-based rep.

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